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Book Review: P.Fell and D. Hayes (2007) What are they doing here? Birmingham: Venture Press

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Book Review: P. Fell and D. Hayes (2007) What are They Doing Here? A Critical Guide to Asylum and Immigration. Birmingham: Venture Press. ISBN 978 1 86178 077 5, 258 pp

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BOOK REVIEWS

- P. Fell and D. Hayes (2007) *What are They Doing Here? A Critical Guide to Asylum and Immigration*. Birmingham: Venture Press. ISBN 978–1–86178–077–5, 258 pp.

In the UK, managed migration policies ensure that only highly-skilled people are able to enter the country legally, and enforce strict regulations on people seeking to come to the UK under other circumstances. *What are They Doing Here? A Critical Guide to Asylum and Immigration* takes issue with the way in which asylum seekers and refugees are marginalized and stereotyped in UK policy and media discourses. The authors adopt a critical approach to exploring the factors which force people across the globe to seek humanitarian protection and raise important issues related to the conflicts for professionals, including social workers, who must balance the rights, and best interests of migrant people with immigration legislation within this highly-politicized context. Fell and Hayes provide valuable information regarding UK immigration issues, and the book has relevance to the international social work arena, particularly across western Europe where migration policies have become increasingly more restrictive for non-EU entrants.

In the preface, the authors state their aims in relation to challenging current thinking in political and media discourses about asylum and immigration; this is a theme throughout the book. As a commentary on the current political thrust towards managed migration and what this means in reality, this book serves a useful function in identifying key legislation and international conventions which guarantee the rights of refugees and displaced people. The authors discuss the ways in which strict border security policies limit legal methods of entry and thereby increase the use of risky irregular modes. They are critical of national policies which withdraw support for people who fail in their asylum claims, and argue vehemently for the rights of asylum seekers to be recognized and promoted.

The authors' aim of dispelling myths about asylum is illustrated with examples of how immigration systems and processes mitigate against entry, and how asylum seekers' entitlements to the same rights as the resident UK population are differentiated and unequal. Using international comparative studies, *What are They Doing Here?* examines the way in which failed asylum seekers are treated; having limited access to public funds, and as a consequence having to

rely on informal support networks and charitable groups, whilst living under the threat of deportation. The standpoint of the migrant is highlighted in relation to the support asylum seekers need when they are reporting to the UK authorities, the evidence and substantiation they are required to produce for an asylum claim, and the views which migrants have about immigration systems in the UK.

Asylum and immigration policies are of increasing relevance to social work in relation to the ability of families to come to the UK or be reunited with family members, and this book identifies important issues regarding policies which restrict family reunification and the way in which cultural beliefs about marriage and the family discriminate against people being able to join intended spouses, and parents or children. The conflicts between the UK government policy agendas on children and immigration are also discussed in a number of sections of the book. Providing social work presence at ports of entry for example can assist in assessing the needs of separated children, but can also act as an arm of immigration control.

The book draws together a range of sources in an easy to access reference guide, which provides an overview of the work of refugee organizations and the support they are able to offer. Other sections cover medical, education and housing issues, legislation and asylum processes. The authors use a mixture of sources which provide additional information on the research literature and on UK policies. Further reading suggestions are made at the end of each section, which refer to official websites of national and international campaigning and support organizations and relevant UK government departments. The authors make clear points and the book is written in accessible language, with an emphasis on explaining and illustrating the points with examples from practice and case histories.

What are They Doing Here? draws on the authors' experiences of working to support asylum seekers in the UK and teaching social work courses which include immigration and asylum issues. This book would serve as a useful introductory text for UK professionals working with asylum seekers and refugees and to social work students who are new to the area and wish to familiarize themselves with issues relevant to working with this client group. By drawing on practice experience and evidence from those working with asylum seekers coming to the UK, Fell and Hayes have challenged some of the assumptions which the media and policy discourses promote and have made clear that the realities for people coming to the UK for protection and humanitarian aid are far from ideal. This book is a timely contribution to the literature in this area. The authors question the language and meaning which underpins UK migration policies, and raise important ethical issues which social workers across Europe and other areas of the globe grapple with in this highly politicized area of work.

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